

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 6-8, and 11-15 were presented for examination in the present application and remain pending upon entry of the instant response, which is respectfully requested. Claims 7, 11, and 14 have been withdrawn, but remain pending for rejoinder upon the allowance of generic claim 1.

Claims 1-3, 6, 12-13, and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 over U.S. Patent No. 5,688,331 to Aruga et al. (Aruga) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,994,251 to Niwa (Niwa) and U.S. Publication No. 2000/0185487 to Divakar et al. (Divakar). Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 over Aruga and Niwa in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,044,311 to Mase et al. (Mase).

Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Independent claim 1 requires, in part, “a seal ring interposed between the first and second seal surfaces”.

The Final Office Action asserts that Aruga discloses fastening support plate 39 to cylindrical member 25 with screws (col. 4, lines 38-40). Further, the Final Office Action acknowledges that Aruga does not disclose any sealing structure between the plate 39 and the cylindrical member 25. Rather, the Final Office Action not only asserts that it would be obvious to seal between the plate 39 and the cylindrical member 25, but also that it would be obvious to use the sealing ring of Niwa in view of Divakar for this seal.

Applicants respectfully submit that Aruga teaches away from the modifications proposed by the Office Action. Applicants submit that Aruga does not disclose the sealing structure between the plate 39 and the cylindrical member 25 because no such structure exists. Rather, Applicants submit that Aruga, instead of sealing between these two parts, is designed to compensate for the leakage. Specifically, Aruga discloses continuously feeding inert gas into the cylindrical member 25. This inert gas creates a

pressure differential with the external gas atmosphere and it is this pressure differential that prevents external gas from leaking into the cylindrical member 25. Moreover, Aruga discloses that the inert gas feed is provided because in this configuration it is difficult to perfectly adhere the alumina cylindrical member 25 to the bottom of the aluminum nitride susceptor wafer support plate 39 to maintain a perfect gas tight seal. See col. 5, lines 1-5.

Thus, Aruga recognizes the problem of leakage but offers no way to form a seal. Rather, Aruga solves the problem of leakage, not by a seal ring as claimed, but by ensuring a higher pressure inside the cylindrical member 25 as compared to outside the member.

Applicants respectfully submit that modifying Aruga to seal between plate 39 and the cylindrical member 25 as proposed by the Office Action is simply not feasible. Sealing this space would eliminate the need to continuously feed inert gas into the cylindrical member 25, which is a process that is required by Aruga.

Accordingly, Applicants submit there is no motivation to add a seal ring to the device of Aruga and that Aruga specifically teaches against such a modification. As such, Aruga alone or in combination with Niwa, Mase, and/or Divakar, does not disclose claim 1, which requires a seal ring.

Claim 1 is therefore believed to be in condition for allowance. Claims 2-3, 6, 12-13, and 15 are also believed to be in condition for allowance for at least the reason that they depend from the aforementioned claim 1. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections to claims 1-3, 6, 12-13, and 15 are respectfully requested.

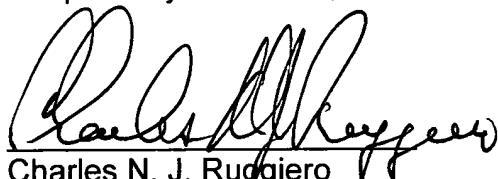
In addition, Applicants respectfully request rejoinder of withdrawn claims 7, 11, and 14, which are also believed to be in condition for allowance for at least the reason that they depend from the aforementioned claim 1.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance.

In the alternative, it is respectfully submitted that the instant response places the application in better condition for appeal. Accordingly, entry and consideration of the instant response, at least for the purposes of appeal, are respectfully requested.

If for any reason the Examiner feels that consultation with Applicants' attorney would be helpful in the advancement of the prosecution, the Examiner is invited to call the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,



Charles N. J. Ruggiero
Reg. No. 28,468
Attorney for Applicant(s)
Ohlandt, Greeley, Ruggiero & Perle, L.L.P.
One Landmark Square, 10th floor
Stamford, CT 06901-2682
Tel: (203) 327-4500
Fax: (203) 327-6401

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